228 656 178 The Bahrain Government has tried hard to encourage the diving industry, by the remittance of the registration fees on diving boats, by customs concessions and by other means, but it is certain that the industry will never return to its palmy days when so many of the people of Bahrain were connected with it or depended on it.

228 431 609 Visitors to the pearl banks are advised to set out at about midnight from Bahrain. Launches can be hired in Manama or Muharraq and if they leave at twelve midnight, the banks will be reached at two or three in the morning. The remainder of the night can be spent lying at anchor and in the early morning the opening of the shells can be watched, followed by the preparations for the day's work and the actual diving. The divers have no objection to being photographed at their work and welcome foreigners on board their boats, they do, however, appreciate a present from visitors and it is a good plan to take out some fresh dates or other fruit, for the boats, particularly at the end of the season, are usually low in fresh provisions and such a gift is very welcome.

CHAPTER VII

LOCAL INDUSTRIES

THE POTTERIES

323 [438] PEARLING is not the only ancient industry in Bahrain, for the presence in many parts of the islands of pottery sherds indicates that pottery has been made here for many centuries. Today this industry is restricted to the village of Aali whose inhabitants work in the same way as did their forefathers, scorning modern innovations.

[472] From the hills around Rifaa the clay is brought to Aali, brown and red clay for the coarser objects and white clay for finer work. The raw clay is beaten and then mixed with water until it is ready for throwing by the younger members of the potter's family, for each pottery is a separate family concern. All the processes which go into the making of pottery take place in small sheds, in each one a potter can be seen at work, his feet in a pit working the wheel which is on a level with his waist. Rapidly he flings lumps of clay on to the spinning wheel and with deft fingers works the shapeless mud into graceful jars, bowls and other utensils. When each piece is completed it is set in the sun to dry before being taken to the oven. Most of the ovens [172] are built in the prehistoric tumuli south of the village, which have been excavated. A hole is made in the roof of the tomb and another at the side; in the former the objects to be baked are placed and the latter is filled with firewood. When the fires are lit the tombs become miniature volcanoes with thick smoke belching from their peaks, slowly the fires die down, the smoke clears and the baked pottery is removed and the ovens are prepared for the next baking.

The products of Aali are simple in the extreme, pots, bowls, water jars and dishes, utensils which have always been used by the people of Bahrain and which still find a ready market though the increased prosperity of the people enables them to buy cheap imported goods. It is not necessary to go to Aali itself to see the products of the potteries for at the Suq al-Araba in Manama on Wednesday mornings and at the Suq al-Khamis market on Thursday mornings the people of Aali bring their goods for sale.

At Aali the photographer will find many subjects for his camera. The potters in their workshops with the sun shining on the damp yellow clay, the symmetrical stacks of jars drying in the sun, the small boys in bright clothes running up and down the steep sides of the tumuli with objects to be baked and finally the removal of the finished articles, all these scenes provide fascinating pictures.

NURA (LIME)

Aali, as well as being the centre of the Bahrain pottery industry, is the principal place where lime is produced. Stone for the purpose is hewn from the ground in many parts of Bahrain, especially near Rifaa, and is taken in lorries or in donkey carts to Aali. Here the blocks of limestone are arranged on layers of wood, usually date palm trunks, and the wood is then fired. Men with large wooden flails stand round the piles of lime-stone and beat it into powder, chanting as they work and timing the singing to the down strokes of the threshers. When the lime becomes fine powder it is sieved and then placed in sacks. The produce of Aali commands a ready sale, for all the white-wash used in Bahrain is made there or in the neighbourhood and with the present building activities the people of the country have their work cut out to supply the local demand.

There is also in Bahrain a lime factory, owned by a member of the Ruling Family, where lime is produced by modern methods.

FISHING

Fish and fish oil are used for many purposes in Bahrain. The former is one of the staple items of food among the poorer classes, it is used for manure in gardens and for feeding cows and donkeys. Fish oil is used for oiling wooden boats to make them seaworthy. The fact that Bahrain cows are fed on fish, together with dates, date stones, lucerne and bran, leads people to expect that the local milk will taste unusual. This is not true despite the reports of journalists, who hear about the fishy diet without tasting the milk and describe its flavour as unpleasant. Milk from Bahrain cows, if they receive a balanced diet, is unusually good and has a higher average fat content than the milk of ordinary English cows. The use of fish oil on the boats along the shore has little to commend itself to visitors, the smell is extremely disagreeable and drives the people who live in houses near the sea to shut all their windows when the boats are being treated.

1: Belgrave F-3 (no date) 1953 MZ2 Bahrain MZ2

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The Ruler's Palace at Rifaa al-Gharbi. Photo : National Art Studio.

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An Ash potter making jar tops.

A hunting falcon on the hand of one of the Ruler's retainers. Photo : Sir Charles Belgrave.

1; Belgrave F-3 (no date) 1953 MZ2 Bahrain MZ2

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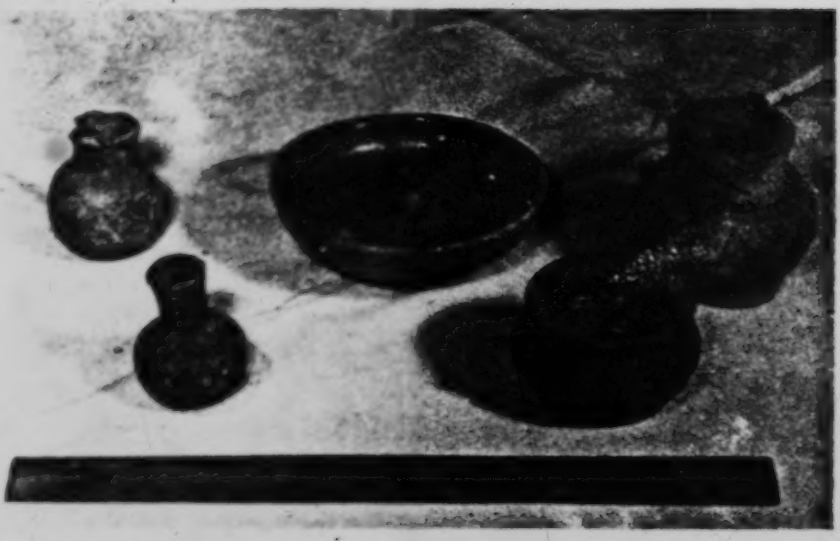

A bowl and some jars found in a tumulus on the Budeiya Road. Photo : General Stores

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The Ruins of the Suq al-Khamis Mosque. Photo : The Author.